

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 5220

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST CAR SALES ON WESTERN MARKETS:

FRANCE (C-ER-4-57806)

REF: STATE 010606

1. SUMMARY. FRANCE'S IMPORTS OF PASSENGER CARS FROM EASTERN EUROPE ARE STILL VERY SMALL. HOWEVER, SUCH IMPORTS HAVE ALMOST QUADRUPLED IN TWO YEARS MOVING FROM 2,634 UNITS IN 1971 TO 9,934 IN 1973. IT IS EXPECTED THAT PASSENGER CAR IMPORTS FROM THESE SOURCES WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. IMPORTS OF VEHICLES OTHER THAN PASSENGER CARS FROM EASTERN EUROPE ARE NEGLIGIBLE AND ARE NOT EXPECTED TO BECOME SIGNIFICANT. END SUMMARY.

2. WE DELAYED REPLY TO REFTEL TO SECURE COMPLETE FIGURES ON 1973, WHICH WE HAVE JUST OBTAINED FROM THE FRENCH ASSOCIATION OF CAR IMPORTERS.

3. OFFICIAL IMPORT STATISTICS DO NOT INCLUDE REQUIRED DETAILS. WE HAVE USED REGISTRATION FIGURES OF NEW REGPEAT NEW MOTOR VEHICLES. WE BELIEVE THEY ARE ADEQUATE FOR THE PLANNED STUDY. THEY SHOW AN INCREASED PENETRATION OF THE FRENCH PASSENGER CAR MARKET IN 1972 AND 1973 PARTICULARLY, IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, BY CZECHOSLOVAKIA, POLAND, AND THE SOVIET UNION. EAST EUROPEAN
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EXPORTS TO FRANCE OF VEHICLES OTHER THAN PASSENGER CARS

CONTINUE TO BE NEGLIGIBLE.

4. WE WERE ABLE TO SECURE 1973 RETAIL PRICES OF TWO SKODA PASSENGER CARS: (1) FIVE-PASSENGER BERLINE: FF8,610; AND (2) COUPE GRAND LUXE: FF12,700. THESE PRICES INCLUDE ALL TAXES, BUT TRANSPORTATION AND PREPARATION COSTS ARE ADDED SEPARATELY.

5. THE STATISTICS (NUMBERS OF UNITS) BELOW ARE FOR THE YEARS 1971, 1972, AND 1973 IN THAT ORDER:

A. FRANCE'S TOTAL NEW PASSENGER CAR REGISTRATIONS (DOMESTIC AND IMPORTED): 1,468,571; 1,637,472; 1,745,795.

B. REGISTRATIONS OF IMPORTED NEW PASSENGER CARS: 296,344; 338,062; 362,495.

C. MARKET SHARE OF IMPORTED PASSENGER CARS: 20.17 PERCENT; 20.64 PERCENT; 20.76 PERCENT.

D. REGISTRATIONS OF NEW PASSENGER CARS IMPORTED FROM EASTERN EUROPE (IN BRACKETS THEIR RANK ORDER AMONG IMPORTED BRANDS): SKODA FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA: 2,056 (ELEVENTH); 6,441 (TENTH); 5,883 (ELEVENTH). POLSKY FIAT: 408 (SIXTEENTH); 2,184 (FOURTEENTH); 3,317 (FIFTEENTH). LADA FROM USSR: NONE; NONE; 1,586 (SIXTEENTH). MOSKVITCH FROM USSR: 170 (NINETEENTH); 60 (TWENTIETH); 20 (TWENTY-SEVENTH). ZASTAVA FROM YUGOSLAVIA: NONE; NONE; 724 (NINETEENTH).

E. TOTAL PASSENGER CAR IMPORTS FROM EASTERN EUROPE, INCLUDING YUGOSLAVIA (IN BRACKETS PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL CAR IMPORTS): 2,634 (0.89); 8,685 (2.57); 9,934 (2.74).

F. IMPORTS FROM EASTERN EUROPE OF VEHICLES OTHER THAN PASSENGER CARS ARE NEGLIGIBLE. THE ONLY BRAND WE COULD FIND WAS TATRA FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA: 44; 63; 52. THIS OUT OF TOTAL SUCH VEHICLE IMPORTS OF 31,346; 35,634; 40,634.

6. COMMENT. WHILE FRANCE'S IMPORTS OF MOTOR VEHICLES FROM EASTERN EUROPE REPRESENT UNTIL NOW A RELATIVELY VERY SMALL SHARE OF TOTAL VEHICLE IMPORTS, AND A MINUTE SHARE OF TOTAL REGISTRATIONS, THE FIGURES CONFIDENTIAL

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ABOVE SHOW ALMOST A QUADRUPLING OF THE NUMBER OF PASSENGER CARS FROM EASTERN EUROPE IN THE BRIEF PERIOD OF TWO YEARS (1973 AGAINST 1971). THESE CARS ARE GENERALLY MORE SUITABLE TO THE EUROPEAN MARKET, AND ARE EXPECTED TO INCREASE FURTHER THEIR PENETRATION OF THE FRENCH MARKET.
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